

Go and Make Disciples

By Jim and Carolyn Murphy

Part II

September 2001

In Part I of this teaching, we examined the need for mature Christians to mentor younger believers, making them true disciples, not simply converts. We will now look more closely at the mentoring process focusing on the book of 2 Timothy.

Choosing Disciples

In order for a mentor-disciple relationship to prosper and succeed, the two people involved need to be reasonably compatible. Observe the younger Christians in your church. Look for one who shows a real openness to guidance and fellowship. A natural attraction for each other or a sort of friendship may develop between the two people. This natural gravitation to each other may be based on having the same call or gifts, or having something else in common like a profession, or whatever. I think this is often the way the Holy Spirit brings two people together for a mentoring relationship.

If you want to be discipled by a more mature Christian, the same process applies. Look around and ask the Holy Spirit to point out to you a person who could mentor you. It is often helpful to ask others in the church who know the person better than you do for their opinion. But remember, never get into a mentoring relationship without asking the Holy Spirit to confirm it.

Getting Started

Invite your younger believer into a casual social setting with you. Ask him (or her) to tell you about himself. What are his plans? What does he want to do in life? How does God fit into his plans? Does he have a heart for God? What is his level of Bible knowledge? By letting him do most of the talking, you can learn much about him.

After you think you have learned enough, suggest that you establish a mentor relationship. Make sure he understands that this relationship is to be an ongoing process that will last for at least a few months or even years. If, for any reason, the other person declines, don't be discouraged. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you find someone else.

The Mentoring Process

I intend the following topics to be helpful suggestions. I do not view them as step-by-step rules that everyone should follow.

1. Be A Friend

The disciple may be a little apprehensive at first, especially if you are well known in the community, or in your church. An early objective with your new disciple is

to become his or her friend. It is very important that you not allow a "boss" attitude to develop. If this happens, the entire future success of your mentoring process could be at risk.

Be aware that men of all ages tend to relate to one another in a general, superficial manner. So men, both as mentors and disciples, need to work at being transparent and open to deeper sharing of emotions, problems, etc. On the other hand, women just naturally more easily befriend other women and share deeper feelings, thoughts, and problems.

And, as with all friendships, there should be a sense of good humor and fun throughout. Laughter, even at ourselves, is good for the soul as well as the spirit.

2. Establish Genuine Communication

As part of the development of a true friendship, try to establish a level of communication that frees your disciple to share his thoughts and fears. Don't expect this kind of openness to happen quickly. As I have already said, men tend to think of themselves as self-sufficient and thus often talk in superficialities so this kind of communication takes time and effort.

I have read that there are four levels of communication. They are:

- a) Superficialities ("Wasn't that a great soccer game yesterday?")
- b) Exchange of information ("There will be a meeting tonight at 7.")
- c) Intelligent dialogue about ideas (I don't agree with . . .)
- d) Innermost secrets and thoughts (I'm depressed about my marriage.)

Every mentor's goal should be to reach the fourth level of communication when needed and to stay at that level until the shared problem or issue is resolved, or at least moved forward.

3. Your Attention

One of the most valuable things you can give another human being is your undivided attention. All of us, at one time or another, have been guilty of half listening to someone while they are talking. Try to clear your mind and devote your undivided attention to your disciple. If important thoughts occur to you during a time when he is talking, develop the habit of making a quick note of the thought to yourself so you can come back to it later and then continue to give your disciple the attention he or she deserves.

4. Respect Confidences

This is an absolutely vital aspect of any mentoring role. You must both respect each other's confidences. Agree at the beginning that whatever is shared is to be kept only between the two of you unless you specifically agree to tell someone else. If your mentoring is in a small group setting, then everything said should never go beyond those in the group. The reason for this rule is obvious. If your disciple cannot trust you to keep quiet about whatever she or he tells you, then he will be much more guarded with you, and rightly so. Of course, if you are the mentor, you must use good judgment in what you share with your disciple.

5. Regular, Scheduled Meetings

It is very important to have regularly scheduled meetings with your disciple. Twice a month or weekly usually works well. The meetings should be at least one to two hours long. This gives enough time to deal with any subject matter in some depth.

It is also important that these meetings be in a quiet place without distractions such as radios, TV, music, or work interruptions. I find that meeting in a neutral place helps, such as a restaurant, or at home if it's quiet. This gets you away from other responsibilities and lets both of you focus on your discussions.

6. Planned & Unplanned Discussions

As the mentoring process continues, there will be times when you assign your disciple study subjects. You may want to prepare a series of questions to discuss. This is a very effective way of getting discussions going and creates a good teaching setting with give and take on everyone's part.

There are also times when the Holy Spirit wants to do some teaching. Allow these unplanned discussions to happen. Your disciple will learn valuable lessons as the Holy Spirit orchestrates the discussion. I remember once when I was having a long lunch with a young man and, completely unplanned by me, we got into a discussion about demonic spirits and spiritual warfare. Less than a week later he found himself in a situation where he had to take authority and bind a spirit that was attacking one of his children. He called me very excited and we laughed and agreed that, if the demonic attack had happened two weeks earlier, he probably wouldn't even have recognized it, let alone known how to deal with it. Obviously the Holy Spirit knew what was coming and wanted this young man to be ready. God is so faithful if we would only let the Holy Spirit do more leading and we would do more following!

7. Financial Considerations

I mentioned that a restaurant may be a good place to meet. However, meals and drinks cost money. Be aware of the costs involved before you suggest something. Do not let yourself get into a situation where your relationship is costing either of you more money than is reasonable and prudent.

8. Travel With You

If you are in ministry, or even travel on business, a great way to spend time with your disciple is to invite him or her to travel with you. This provides a rich opportunity for fellowship, discipling and modeling. Certainly we see from Scripture that this was the Apostle Paul's most frequently used classroom. Paul was always taking his disciples with him. One of the benefits was that it gave him hours and days of time to teach and train them. I have no doubt that Paul's interaction with other believers and those in the world enriched everyone traveling with him.

9. Exposure to Mature Ministry Calls and Gifts

Whatever gifts or ministry call God has given to your disciple, it is very important to expose him to similarly gifted, more mature ministers. He or she should spend time with people who have developed similar calls and gifts. If someone is in ministry, your disciple should travel with them if possible, and simply sit under their ministry as much as possible. He will learn a great deal this way.

One word of caution here. Without being critical of any minister, make sure your disciple doesn't begin to simply imitate a mature minister whom he admires. Unfortunately, when this occurs, the younger ministers often picks up the older minister's bad habits as well as his strong points. I have seen this happen many times. I fell into this trap myself many years ago. I sat under a teacher whom I admired very much and I found myself using his phrases, imitating his mannerisms, etc. The Holy Spirit called me on it and told me that I was to be the man of God that He was making me to be, not an imitation of someone God had already made. Encourage your disciple to make it his goal to imitate Jesus, not other men! Remember Paul's words, "Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children." (Eph 5:1 NIV)

2 Timothy as a Model

I want to end this study by looking at several points and principles Paul wrote to his disciple, Timothy. I believe any mentor can focus on Paul's two epistles to Timothy and have enough material with which to mentor for a very long time. This is some of what the Spirit Filled

Life Bible wrote as an introduction to 2 Timothy.

“This epistle is a handbook for young ministers of the gospel. The church needs more Timothys who are determined to guard the gospel as a sacred deposit committed to them, who are faithful to proclaim it, who are ready to suffer for it, and who will pass it on to faithful followers.

“Although Paul is terse and to the point, he is also tender, warm, and affectionate. Second Timothy reveals Paul's emotions more than his intellect, because his heart was speaking. Consequently, the letter is not an orderly, well-planned literary production, but a personal note containing the apostle's last will and testament.¹

1. Pray for your Disciple

Paul begins his letter by stating, “I thank God, whom I serve, as my forefathers did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers.” (2 Tim 1:3 NIV) Paul said he constantly prayed for this young man. As a mentor, you can pray that the Holy Spirit develops your disciple's character, and his understanding and devotion to Christ. Pray that he makes time to study and to pray. Pray that he develops into a mature, godly leader in God's church. Pray for his family, or his finances, and anything else you feel led to pray.

2. Stir up the Gifts

Then, after he told Timothy he constantly prayed for him, Paul encouraged him to stir up the gifts he has. “For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.” (2 Tim 1:6 NIV) Part of your job as mentor is to help identify and develop the gifts your disciple has been given. (See 1 Cor 12:8-10,28, Rom 12:6-8, Eph 4:11.)²

3. Don't be Afraid

The very next sentence Paul wrote to Timothy was, “For God did not give us a spirit of timidity [fear], but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. (2 Tim 1:7 NIV) Paul understood the problems and difficulties Timothy no doubt was facing and would continue to encounter in his ministry. So Paul deliberately encouraged him to stand against his fears and insecurities and to remind him that, in Christ, we have God's Spirit of power, love and self-discipline.

4. Strong in Grace

Paul begins his second chapter with a directive to Timothy to be strong in grace. “You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.” Here it would be appropriate to study the whole wonderful concept of grace in its many aspects. God has given us so much grace

if we would just recognize it and then do as Paul says, be strong in it.

5. Recognize the Hardships and Sufferings

Paul didn't attempt to hide hardships and suffering from Timothy. He said, “So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life . . .” (2 Tim 1:8,9 NIV) “In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted . . .” (2 Tim 3:12 NIV)

Paul encourages Timothy to endure hardship like a good soldier of Christ Jesus, to consider himself an athlete who competes according to the rules, and to be like the hardworking farmer who should be the first to receive his share of the crops. (See 2 Tim 2:3-7)

6. To Flee Sin and Pursue Righteousness

We all know and love Paul's famous admonition to young Timothy to, “Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” (2 Tim 2:22 NIV) A vital part of your mentoring is to help hold your young disciple accountable to flee temptations and to pursue righteousness in the fellowship of other believers who are doing the same. As we look through the Bible, so many of the heroes of the faith had older men and women who taught them and admonished them in these areas.

7. Be Diligent to Study the Word

Paul directs Timothy several times in this epistle to read, study, and to ultimately rightly divide the word of God. “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.” (2 Tim 2:2:15 NIV) “But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Tim 3:14-17 NIV)

If your disciple hasn't already developed the habit, he must begin now setting a time aside for daily Bible reading, study, and prayer. This is a foundation stone in a Christian's life. No Christian can successfully grow in Christ without it. Of course, you must model this discipline as part of your role as mentor. Never let yourself get into the position of encouraging another

Christian to, “do as I say, not as I do.”

8. Preach the Word

Paul wrote these powerful words. “. . . I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage - with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear . . . But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.” (2 Tim 4:1b-3,5 NIV)

Notice that Paul calls these words to Timothy a charge or a command. Paul knows that he is coming to the end of his life and he doesn't want to waste words. He is deadly serious in these words to Timothy and you can just feel the power in them.

9. Look to Me as an Example

To me, these words of Paul's are among the scariest in the whole Bible. Paul doesn't hesitate to tell Timothy to look to him as his example in ministry. Here are some of the things he said. “What you heard from me, keep as a pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus.” (2 Tim 1:13 NIV) “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.” (2 Tim 2:2 NIV) “You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings - what kinds of things happened to me . . .” (2 Tim 3:10,11 NIV) Finally, Paul said to the Philippians, “Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me - put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.” (Phil 4:9 NIV)

What an awesome responsibility we have as mentors, or as role models in the body of Christ! How many of us would freely say to others, “Follow me, my

example, my life, etc. as I follow Christ”? But that is the pattern that the Holy Spirit set, through Paul's writings, for us to follow. We may not like it, but that is our responsibility as well as our privilege as we move among other believers, especially those not as mature as we are.

Conclusion

I believe a good, Christ-centered mentor/disciple relationship is one of the most rewarding experiences a Christian can have. How better can we spend our time than encouraging younger men and women in their walk with Christ? How better can we pass down to the next generation the ways of the Lord than to spend time teaching and counseling those who will pick up the mantle of leadership in the church? And, of course, when we do mentor those around us, we are fulfilling the great commission in the fullest sense, to go into all the world and make disciples!

Lord, thank you that Your word is so clear that we are to make disciples. Give us the grace, the insight, the focus, and the commitment to do so. Cause us to set aside the time we need so that we can more fully enter into these valuable relationships. Show us who we are to disciple, or who we should ask to mentor us. May we succeed in this generational discipling until You return. Thank You, Lord, that even as we are being obedient to this command, we are and will be blessed. In Jesus' name we ask. Amen.

1. *Spirit Filled Life Bible*, New King James Version, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1991, page 1851.

2. These subjects are covered in our book, *An International Ministers' Manual*.

HUNDREDFOLD MINISTRIES, INTERNATIONAL

P. O. Box 625
Blue Jay, CA 92317

Telephone 909/336-9701

E-mail: jim.murphy@hundredfold.org Web site: www.hundredfold.org

Rev. Jim Murphy and his wife, Carolyn, of Blue Jay, California, United States, head Hundredfold Ministries, International. They write Christian teaching literature and travel to the Developing Nations of the world teaching Christian leaders. Hundredfold Ministries, Int'l is a cross-denominational Christian ministry dedicated to strengthening the church in the Developing Nations of the world.

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